Wildlife Investigations Laboratory



Wildlife Rehabilitation 2008 Annual Report California Department of Fish and Game

Submitted by:

Nicole Carion Associate Wildlife Biologist Wildlife Investigations Lab December 2009 As a condition of the wildlife rehabilitation Memorandum of Understanding, permitees are required to provide an "End of the Year Annual Report" to notify the Department regarding the species, number and final disposition of animal received.

Wildlife rehabilitation facilities are required to submit a yearly report that includes reporting the disposition of animals handled in the following categories: Total number of species received, total number transferred, total number pending (still being evaluated), total number released, total number expired, and total number euthanized. The reports are sent to and kept by the state wildlife rehabilitation coordinator. This report summarizes the results of 2008 wildlife rehabilitation activities (numbers are approximate).

In the year 2008, one hundred and fourteen (114) permitted California wildlife rehabilitation facilities received 70,233 sick, injured or orphaned wild animals from the general public. As in previous years, the majority of wildlife species brought to facilities were birds. In 2008, a total of 51,683 birds were received, 18,366 mammals and 184 reptiles. Birds represent 73 percent or the animals received, mammals represent 26 percent and reptiles represent .02 percent of the animals received. See Table 1.

Species	Total	Percentage
Birds	51, 683	73.6%
Mammals	18,366	26.1%
Reptiles	184	0.3%

Table 1. Summary % of Types of Terrestrial Species Received (2008)

Three hundred forty-three (343) different species of wild animals were rehabilitated including 263 different types of avian species, 54 different types of mammalian species and 26 different types of reptilian species.

The most common mammal brought into rehabilitation facilities in 2008 was the non-native Virginia Opossum, *Didelphis virginiana* (5,971). The majority of the opossums turned in from the public were from urban areas around the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles/ San Diego area. The most common bird turned into rehabilitation facilities was the Mallard Duck, *Anas platyrhynchos* (3,074) also commonly from urban areas. Other animals frequently turned into rehabilitation facilities include Mourning Doves, *Zenaida macroura* (3,300), American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, House Sparrows, *Passer domesticus* (2,566), Raccoons, *Procyon lotor* (1,696) and Western Gray Squirrels, *Sciurus griseus* (780).

Ninety individual birds that are classified as State and/or Federally Threatened or Endangered Species were turned into rehabilitation centers. These species included 11 Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, 42 Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*, 5 Spotted Owl *Strix occidentalis*, 5 Snowy Plover *Charadrius*

alexandrinus, 1 Clapper Rail Rallus longirostris, 5 Least Turn Sterna antillarum, 19 Bank Swallows Riparia riparia, 1 Yellow Billed Cuckoo Coccyzus americanus, 1 Bell's Vireo Vireo bellii. Thirty-nine of ninety birds were released back into the wild.

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network reported one hundred birds were injured or became sick during an oil spill in 2008. The species of birds affected by oil spills in 2008 are shown in the table below. See table 2.

Common Name	Total # Received	Released	Euthanized	Died
Brown Pelican	1	1		
Clarks Grebe	12	9	1	
Common Loon	2		1	1
Common Murre	5		5	
Eared Grebe	2	1		1
Red-Throated	5		1	4
Loon				
Western Grebe	73	40	22	11

Table 2. Summary of bird species affected by Oil spills in 2008

Animals classified as "Big Game" species in the Fish and Game Code are not allowed to be possessed by wildlife rehabilitators; however, the Department does allow orphaned fawns to be rehabilitated and released under conditions provided in the Wildlife Rehabilitation Memorandum of Understanding.

A total of approximately 519 deer fawns were turned into rehabilitation facilities in 2008. Thirty-two percent (167) of the fawns were re-released back into the wild. The rehabilitation protocol for fawns dictates that all fawns must be rehabilitated only with other fawns from the same deer herd. There are approximately 81 deer herds identified by the Department in California. Each facility has a map of the deer herds and must seek approval if a single fawn from another herd is placed in a neighboring/different herd. Protocol requires a quarantine period before placing new fawns in with other fawns. Fawns raised with other fawns are less likely to become imprinted.

Desert Tortoises found by the public are considered non-releasable because the majority are most likely captive pets that escaped or were released. Captive tortoises are not releasable because of the potential of spreading disease back into the wild tortoise population. A total of 154 Desert Tortoises were turned into wildlife rehabilitation facilities. The California Turtle and Tortoise Club works in finding adoption homes for these animals and facilitates tracking of permits for tortoises. In past rehabilitation "End of the Year Reports" these animals may have been part of the total number of reptiles received, however, as mentioned

above, these animals are not being rehabilitated therefore their numbers are recognized separately in this report and in future reports.

The data collected from "2008 End of the Year Reports" was totaled by each Department Region and reports are available for each Region. This will enable any person interested in wildlife rehabilitation data to see how the different Regions of California compare to with respect to species and numbers. Note: Regions 1 and 2 were totaled together in 2008.

The table below shows the total number of wildlife species received by rehabilitation facilities since the Department started compiling the data in 2004.

Year	Total Number Animals Received	
2004	83,000	
2005	75,696	
2006	69,153	
2007	68,437	
2008	70,233	

Table 3. Previous Year End totals compared to 2008 Totals

Eleven orphaned black bear cubs were found by the public and turned into the Department and Yosemite National Park in 2008. Of these eleven, two bear cubs were placed in permanent captivity; seven were sent to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care for rehabilitation; and two came in August and where released back into the wild. Of the seven bears that went to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care;1 cub was from Yosemite National Park and was released back into the Park, and six of the cubs were released by the Department in late January and early February into manmade dens. Five of these six cubs were released in northern California and were outfitted with VHF ear tag transmitters equipped with a mortality mode triggered by 8 hours of no movement. One cub was released in Southern California and was not equipped with a transmitter. All cubs are required to be released within 75 air miles of where they were found.

Status of the five transmitters (December 2009): one transmitter fell off within one month and was found in mortality mode very close to the area of release; one transmitter ear tag stopped transmitting any signal in May of 2009; one transmitters was heard (not in mortality mode) in July, but not detected again and; two transmitters continue to be functioning (not in mortality mode) and are still being monitored.

All VHF ear tag transmitters are mostly monitored by a specially equipped department airplane. The transmission can be picked up by the plane via telemetry equipment from approximately a 1-5 mile radius if there are no obstructions. Transmitter verification comes from monitoring a signal emitted

from the VHF ear tag and most of the time is not visually confirmed. Note the battery life is approximately 12 months.